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John Wilson

JOHN'S, GOVERNOR

VISITS

DAME EUROPA'S SCHOOL

THE RESULT OF WHICH IS AMONG THINGS
THAT YET REMAIN TO BE SEEN

BEING

A REJOINDER TO 'THE FIGHT'

SEVENTH THOUSAND

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXI

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JOHN'S GOVERNOR
VISITS
DAME EUROPA'S SCHOOL.

I.—REFLECTION.

WELL, a very pretty row there was, you may be sure, at Dame Europa's School; which, like all other rows, great and small, got on to an extent, and into a mess, out of all reasonable comparison with what had first brought it on. It frightened the little boys, and sorely bothered the big boys; in short, it was difficult to find half-a-dozen of them who could come to any exact understanding together as to what it had been all about, and what was to be done to mend it. It was clear the monitors themselves could make neither head nor tail of it. Whether they were themselves a little slow to begin with, or whether Dame Europa expected more than was to be got out of them, or whatever was the reason, it seemed that either they were the wrong boys in the

wrong place, or the place was too much for them. Neither William nor Louis would give in a bit ; the more Louis was beaten the more his division of the school took up the quarrel ; and it was plain that neither the monitors nor the awful Dame herself had the least power to stop the scandal and disgrace to the school.

As for poor Johnnie, who had been singled out as the monitor most to blame, he was in a state of mind I hope you may never feel. He was more than worried ; he was, as he thought, very unjustly hurt. Dame Europa's public homily rang hardly in his ears. He did not much like even a lot of little boys crying out that he "sucked up to both of them," when in his sound, honest, old heart he knew he had never cared a rap what either of them wanted, or what, so far as he was concerned, they chose to do to get it. But when the angry old Dame charged him with caring nothing about the good of the school, with breaking trust, adding something about coward, and leaving everything to go to the dogs so long as he could keep his own place and his own interests all right, he thought this, in schoolboy phrase, was hard lines. He had a real respect for the old Dame, and her high desk and stool ; but he had a strong feeling that this time she had not been quite just or fair.

So monitor John turned the thing over in his mind. He scratched his head, and cudgelled his

brains (though ill-natured people said he hadn't many), and tried to think of something for the best. At last a bright thought came across him. That's the very thing to do: I wonder none of us ever thought of that before. I'll write to the Governor! I daresay some of the fellows will think it sheepish and old-fashioned; perhaps the other monitors may turn up their noses at a Governor's authority and advice, and proper control, and all that kind of thing. Well, I don't care. They can go to him, any of them, when it suits them, because he holds the reins, and keeps the purse; my notion is (and it is a notion older than any of us), that he ought often to be consulted more than he is.

Yes, I'll write to the Governor. He will be sure to take it well, and may very likely come out rather strong about it. Since I came to school this half, I recollect hearing something from home that makes me think he is not quite so satisfied about these Dame's schools as he used to be; or about some of the bigger schools either. He has been talking rather loud about Government inspection, whatever that means; and routing them out of their old groove, and bringing them to book, and making them show up what the work is they have really done every school time. So Dame Europa had better look out. She is a good old lady, and has done her best a long time, I daresay. But she was rather hard upon me with her tongue the other day;

and I should like to try whether she rightly knew what she was talking about, and whether the Governor would be of the same mind or not. Any way, he is the right man to be told the truth of the story, and have the chance of speaking his mind if he likes. So here goes.

And so the letter was written and sent. It just referred in John's plain way to the quarrel between Louis and William, which had become too well known already ; and then described what happened when the matter came up at the school dinner-time, and how Dame Europa had lectured him publicly, and held him up before all the boys, big and little, in a way he thought he had not deserved. He said he thought it best not to have any more words with the Dame at the time ; but to let her hear of it again in another way.

II.—THE GOVERNOR.

Now, before we go any further, you may like to know who, and what kind of man, the Governor was ; and what his place was like, and the sort of position he held in the world. It was not what everybody exactly understood ; and a vast number of the boys, not to mention some of the monitors, had but hazy ideas, and often talked great stuff, about it.

John was supposed to represent his Governor ; and so he did after a fashion. But because the

boys had got hold of a general belief about his shop, and his trade, and his hard work, and his dirty fingers (though, for that matter, he washed and cleaned up more laudably than many of the other boys), they missed their mark considerably in taking this for the old gentleman's type *in toto*. There were a good many aspects, modes, and developments—in fashionable professional slang—of his character: he required to be known at home, and known well, before you could judge much about him. He was so far of a noble and stately character, proud of his history and descent, that his Transatlantic cousins—who, nevertheless, would get a handle to their names if they could at any price—called him an aristocrat; at the same time, he thought so much of honest labour, and industry, and enterprise, and providing well for his family and friends, that others affected to call him shopkeeper, and plebeian, and money-bags. As usual, there was a spice of truth in all that was said; only you would certainly go wrong if you did not take all together into account. You must remember the sense in which he was a nobleman and a gentleman, as well as the endless ways in which he thought it right to be a trader and artisan—not forgetting, too, his just distinctions for science and skill—or you might find, sometimes perhaps to your cost, that you had mistaken your man. He had a good many high names and titles belonging to him that were

often properly used ; but the most common way of describing him—the way he rather liked, and used most himself—was MAGNUS BRITANNICUS, Esq.

He was acknowledged to be a grand old fellow on the whole, especially when he took a well-considered way of his own, and was not badly advised. Like many mortals, he was apt to be cranky in temper ; often put out about trifles, oftener too easy in things of consequence : so much distracted with the wants and claims, and all the noisy opinions, of his huge family, that it was hard for him to get a hearing to speak his mind. He tried to be just and liberal ; to pay well those he trusted in his service ; and expected a like return from them. When he sent Johnnie to Dame Europa's School, he trusted the boy entirely to carry out his wishes, added ample pocket-money to his school expenses, and had every reason to hope for his success and a good report.

Indeed, Squire Britannicus had not at first much disturbed himself about the quarrel between Louis and William. Before it came to fighting, he had sent word to the boys that he thought they were like to make fools of themselves ; and urged them to take advice before it was too late. But they took no notice of his advice at all. Both the French boy and the German boy had evidently been keeping their own look-out. Like two dogs licking their chaps at a street-corner, they were

both keen for a scrimmage. Each had an eye to the other's garden as his own, and, what was worse, neither boy's Governor seemed to concern himself with the affair. On the other hand, many people thought that Louis' Governor, M. le Comte GALLICUS, rather backed his boy, and, as far as shouting and encouragement went, even urged him on. Meantime William's governor, Herr Graf von GERMANICUS, at least held his tongue, and kept his eyes open; while William, a spirited and feeling old chap, let himself be urged (by Mark it was thought) into going straight in for the fight. Well, thought the Squire, if these boys thoroughly mean it, and won't listen to a friend, and if both the Governors quietly leave them to their own devices, how can I make it any further business of mine? The boys ought to be able to take some care of themselves—the old ones, at all events, know their own affairs best. I have talked reason to them as well as I could, and they simply tell me to fill my own pipe, and smoke it! If staid old Governors will not listen to one another, what are we to expect from wilful, scatter-brained boys?

Into some such frame of mind the Squire had gradually brought himself about this foolish business; and he was thinking how much worse than foolish it had become now, when John's letter arrived with the Europa School post-mark on it. We shall perhaps be prepared now to see the sort of effect it took on his mind.

III.—DAME EUROPA'S PARLOUR.

Magnus, the Squire, was not a man to be easily moved. He had been tried with his full share of the ups and downs of the world. What with troubles of his own, and troubles from his neighbours, and a domestic shake now and then that had threatened house and home altogether, he had learned to be thoughtful and cautious; to take men and things at what they were worth; and to put no trust, if he knew it (though he had a blind side sometimes), in mere talk, and clap-trap, and sentimental quackery, in his own family, or among neighbours. Of late years especially he had tried to enlighten his household on these points, and to impress them on his leading boy, Johnnie, each time he sent him to school.

The letter he got, therefore, from the Europa establishment, aroused him disagreeably. He had thought better of the Dame herself; he flattered himself his boy had been better understood in the school. As he read the letter, he said bits of it aloud to himself, and blustered out at them as he went on. "Ah! the old story; William and Louis still at it. . . . I knew they would fight it out. Dame called the monitors over the coals after dinner. . . . I daresay; hope she did not burn her fingers. Took Johnnie to task for the morning's

work. . . . No doubt ; she always would have it he could do more with the boys than any of the rest. Eh! what's all this? Jawed him because he didn't stop the fight? . . . Why, she must think I sent him there to be A 1 in her household police! Rated him for being a neutral? . . . Couldn't understand what a neutral could be? . . . What has become of the woman's wits? Told him before all the boys that neutral was only a fine name for coward? . . . The dear old Dame must have turned bully-boy herself at her respectable age! Well, there is only one thing to be done; I must go and look after the matter myself. It was a very pretty quarrel as it stood; but if the Dame lights up in this fashion, and stirs up the boys in this hot sort of way, she won't stop till she has embroiled the whole school in the fray. There is no help for it; I must go and look into the whole thing. 'Sucked up to both the boys,' indeed! . . . Why, what on earth does he want from either of them? However, I will just go and hear what they each have to say, and talk to the old lady accordingly."

When the stalwart Magnus once made up his mind, the thing was soon done. He ordered out his travelling-gear the same night, and was off next morning. A long railway journey was nothing to him; he had been used to go all about Europa's country when there were no railways at all, and only a steady sort of posting instead. He knew the

old Dame's school headquarters were just now somewhere about the Upper Rhine Provinces ; and, what with rail and steamboats, he managed to get there one morning when the school was finishing breakfast, less than a week after John had written his letter.

You can fancy the various small excitements of such an arrival.—“I say, who's this come? What is up now, have you heard? Was any one sent for out of school?” Johnnie looked a little bit conscious, but all eyes were turned towards the Dame, as she got up out of her great wooden chair, and the plain card of Magnus Britannicus was handed to her, with a message that he desired an interview upon immediate business.

The old lady, to tell the truth, felt a little bit flustered—taken all of a heap, as the boys would say. But she had a dignified way of her own when she chose. She settled her brow, adjusted her spectacles, drew up her long black scarf, and ordered the gentleman to be shown into her private parlour, where she would wait upon him. It was a plain little room, with bare coloured walls, high windows with narrow panes, a few best books in a book-case, some wooden chairs, and a varnished table with some prints and maps lying about upon it. She greeted Magnus on entering with a stiff-backed bow ; and, taking at once to her altitudes as the safest position to intrench herself in, in-

quired to what she was indebted for the honour of his personal visit?

Magnus was in no humour for ceremonies, so he came to the point at once, trying hard for the courtesy that became an English gentleman. "Well, madam, I very much regret to trouble you, especially with a discussion that may be in any way unpleasant. But my boy John has written me a letter with respect to his part in the present unhappy scandal at the Europa School, which has brought me here to speak to you upon it."

The Dame, old and seasoned as she was, coloured up to the very roots of her hair. "Indeed, sir! I had occasion myself to speak to the boy about his conduct in that very matter, for it had not been such as to please me, or to be any credit, I thought, to his position in the school."

"Pardon me—there may perhaps be two opinions on that subject; and I came to say that, if I understand rightly, my view of the matter will differ very materially from yours."

"Very possibly, sir; but" (a little tartly) "am I, or you, in authority at this school?"

"No doubt, madam, the school is your own particular department; but this is a question of my boy's character, and his relation to his own home, and I have come all this way to look into it, because it vitally affects me."

"Affects you? You seem to have been a good

while in coming to that conclusion. How is it you have not favoured us with a word to this effect before ? ”

“ My good lady, if your refractory boys had been as honest with you as they ought, you would have known I did try to reason with them, through confidential friends. John knows it well, and knows how they snubbed me. After that, he could not interfere any further. It would have been waste of breath, besides exceeding any discretion I allowed him.”

“ But, sir,” said the Dame, with a rap on the table of covert wrath, “ I say he *ought* to have interfered ! It was his place ; it was his business ; and not with words only, but with good round blows. What was the good of him, as an upper monitor, if he only stood sheepishly by and looked on ? ”

Magnus began rather to lose patience. “ Why, woman—ahem ! I beg pardon—why, madam, have you really been blind or deaf these late years—years that have knocked on the head the old system you used to go by ? Talk of interfering with other boys’ affairs, and interfering by main force, and dragging their families in along with them ! You might as well go and dig up *ichthyosauri*, or Old Red Sandstone fossils, as dig up the old story of Intervention in the Europa School now. Time was, I know, when I believed in it myself ; so did most

of my family and servants. But we have learnt better, ma'am—we have learnt better; and I don't believe that old mischief of Intervention in Europa family matters will ever be countenanced again."

"Do you mean that?" said the Dame, with a wicked ironical look. "How about that little business of yours—Crimean, I think you called it—not so many years ago?"

Magnus winced a little, but was never put out by an extreme case. "Well, well," he said, "I believe there was an unlucky old bond produced about that; and it was said to be an obligation, however unpleasant. I didn't like it, though; some of my best men of business didn't like it, even when they felt bound to do it; and I am not sure but that if the whole family of old MAGNUS BRITANNICUS could have spoken their minds about it—besides what you call their *Parlementaires*, you understand—it might have been settled some other way, after all. But there was the bond, and it bound other Governors besides me; and the boys then at school did the work under their Governors' express direction. You complain, now, that my boy John stood by and did nothing, when that was just the thing I told him to do. He shall volunteer no more Intervention, if I know it."

"Then is he never to do anything but stand by, and fold his hands, and hold his tongue, whatever happens?"

"I didn't say hold his tongue; but I would much rather he should fold his hands, if that means keeping from force and fisticuffs as long as he can."

"But you have let him do plenty of this work, before—his brothers, at least, who used to be at the school."

"Indeed I have; and sorry I couldn't help it. You mean when that boy Louis' relation, the first fellow you had of the name of Napoleon, pretty well capsized the whole school with his schemes. Yes, we went at it with a will then—in my glorious fellow Wellington's time. Ay, and a desperate cost it was. The bills are not paid yet, and I don't see how they are ever to be paid. I am obliged to collect from the whole family only to pay the interest on them. Don't fancy I grudge that, though; it is the savage pounding and hashing of men, and homes made wretched, that I hate. And mind you, most of the boys' Governors were agreed, and pulling together then. They knew they must put down NAP, or NAP would have put down them. It was not telling one boy to interfere with another boy's home affairs. That is what I think we have no right to do by force."

"Then do you expect to stop fighting altogether? Can you keep it out of Europa School, or any school?"

"Not a bit of it; never, till you can get rid of

lust and crime out of the world. But you keep shirking my main point. I only object to your blaming my boy for minding my orders. When we are bound to fight, we will, and do it as if we meant it. But it shall not be done without full leave and authority sent from home."

Dame Europa's foot had been troubled with fidgets under the table, which found extra vent now in a short sniff of disgust. "Ah!" she said, curtly, "I don't pretend to understand these fine new-fangled words—Non-intervention, and Neutral, and all the rest of it. As far as I know a neutral, I can't bear him."

"So it seems," said Magnus; "and I came here to show you better what a neutral is. Besides," he added, with an ominous little spark from under his eyebrow, "you said something about neutral being only a fine word for coward, I think."

"Just so, sir," was the fierce reply; "I do look upon the word as a convenient phrase for both sneak and coward."

Magnus was in great peril of letting his wrath blaze out, but he contrived to swallow it. He took a short turn in the parlour, and cooled his ire with a timely drop of humour, that answered his purpose better. There was even a touch of drollery in the way he said to himself, "Well, it seems I have not begun to think about this educational inspection a bit too soon. These Dame's schools want

it with a vengeance." Then, turning short round in his walk, he asked in a simple, dry way, "I suppose you use such a thing in the school as an Ainsworth's dictionary, ma'am?"

"Of course we do."

"Then, I don't know if you look into it yourself or not, but any of your masters, or even boys, would tell you that the word neutral means neither sneak nor coward, but one who belongs to neither side."

To this little sally of learning on the Squire's part, Europa did not seem to have an answer cut and dried. So, Dame like, she fell back upon her impulsive feeling, neither retracting nor explaining her words. But as the old gentleman seemed waiting in a kind of amused expectation, she tried another tack altogether, and took the vantage-ground of assailant in the argument.

"Indeed, Sir Magnus," she began, with an air of mortified dignity, "you surprise me greatly. I am quite at a loss to understand you or your course. You have had some of the finest boys in this school. They have always been looked up to as leading boys by the others; a word from them has been always of the greatest weight—mostly, I believe, because the others felt sure that whatever your boy said he was prepared pretty sharply to enforce. But it is very different now. He has lost this position; and I don't think he will get it in a

hurry again. Nobody cares a straw for what he says, nor believes in his being ready to act at any pinch. What with all this fine talk of his neutrality, and conscience, and squeamishness about fighting—and your keeping him in these leading-strings of yours—they think he has lost all his independence and pluck, and may be snubbed and bullied to any extent. I am sorry for him,” wound up the old lady with a patronising sigh—“very sorry for him, and for you too. He had a great *prestige* in the school once, but it is gone now—quite.”

Magnus rubbed his forehead. “Ah! to be sure” (speaking to himself), “I remember some such word as that in Johnnie’s letter.” Then aloud, “I beg pardon; may I ask—if you would repeat—what it was you said my boy had lost?”

“His *prestige*, sir; didn’t I speak plainly? His has gone; and yours, I doubt, with it.”

The Squire could not help breaking out a little this time. “That is a matter of opinion, madam. Whatever you may mean by the word, you are welcome to yours; I hold a strong one of my own. But the opinion must be a very misty one, which you can’t find a plain English word to express. Here you have been talking to me in good round English all this while; you rated John in plain English before all the school; and when it comes to the pith of your rebukes,—to show him the

upshot of his faults—you can't put that into English, but must vamp up a French word to serve your turn! It is time we had educational inspection here, I must say. I thought you knew your business better. To lecture an English boy about *prestige*! You put me out of conceit with Dame's schools altogether."

"I should have thought a Europa education would have helped anybody to understand French," said the Dame, rather dumfounded.

"That's not the point, ma'am," retorted the Squire, in rising dudgeon. "I make a shift to guess at your meaning. But people don't want to be guessing, and picking their way through roundabout hints. A plain thing can be put in plain words. And when we can't have the plain word, depend upon it the thing is neither plain nor straightforward. You meant to insinuate, I suppose, that old Magnus at home, and his boy at the school, had lost all the credit, honour, and influence that ought to belong to them—that they had become nobodies, in short. Is that what you meant by their *prestige* being gone?"

"Well—ahem!—you are so very abrupt. I did think something of the kind."

"Then, madam, you had better have said so. But you hardly had confidence for such plain speaking; if you had, I can tell you most of my Europa friends would have laughed at you outright.

But I am not going to bandy words about this. It is not for me to cry up my own influence or authority with my neighbours ; I leave facts to convince you in due time. For the present, I think we have got as far as we can together. I should like to see these boys myself to-morrow in your presence, and have a better understanding about this matter before I leave."

"Do you demand a formal school inspection, sir?"

"I don't want any form about it. You may call it whatever you prefer. I only mean that I should like to speak to the boys in open school—as you did yourself the other day—and tell them what I think of the course you blamed John for. That would be fair play all the world over. You will be free to speak your mind as you please, only I must speak mine. And if they should write all about it to their own Governors at home, so much the better."

Europa was still not very gracious ; but there was no getting out of such a fair proposal. So it was settled this should take place in the morning, instead of the usual school business. Magnus went off, rather tired and chafed, to his village Gasthaus ; had John to dine with him ; and grumbled over strange meats, *sauer kraut*, and sourer wine, till bed-time.

IV.—THE SCHOOL INSPECTION.

Betimes next morning the school was astir with expectation. The boys knew there must be something up, for they had hardly seen the Dame since she went out with the visiting-card in her hand. She appeared at supper-time, but looked glum, and said nothing. There was little time for speculating; for, as soon as morning school assembled, ordinary work was suspended, and then the matter began to explain itself.

Punctual to his time, Magnus arrived at the school, was ushered in with some little ceremony, of which he seemed impatient, and took a seat by the old lady's desk. He had first thought of making a little opening speech, but gave it up at once on looking round the school. The various faces turned upon him suggested there was plenty to be done besides speech-making—a pastime he got heartily tired of, as practised by his own Parlementaires at home.

So he opened the business in a few frank, good-tempered words: "Boys of the Europa School, I need not tell you—for you might be sure of it—how many people have been offended and distressed at the fight that has caused so much noise and damage here lately. I never heard of such a one before. From morning to night, and day after day, it has

been going on, as if it was never to come to an end. The scandal—yes, you may well look disgusted, Louis and William, both of you—I say, the scandal is intolerable. I warned you, so did other friends too, what it would come to. To you, Louis, especially, I sent word by John to retract your angry word, and keep your hands quiet: you just growled out, ‘It is too late,’ and marched off. Now, having got in a helpless mess, you scream out, ‘Can’t you come and help a fellow, John?’ I have been very sorry to find—excuse me, madam—our worthy Dame here has taken up with the same cry. She thinks John ought to have gone in and helped, and hit out right and left to make William give it up. She said so before the whole school the other day, and even said (that was the worst of it) that John kept back for fear he should get knocked about, and tear his clothes, and be saddled with all kinds of expense. Now it is my business to tell you—I have come on purpose—that John troubled himself with no such thoughts. I really scorn to defend him on that point. If you don’t understand him, or believe in him, from what he has proved himself many a time before, you had better read the school annals, and inform yourselves. What you might not know, perhaps, and the thing I came to tell you, is just this: that John kept to the orders I gave him; and I am glad that he let nothing tempt him to go beyond them. All the world knows there

is no mistake about his fighting, under orders he is bound to respect; but without them he has no business to move. He has been a little too ready at times, perhaps, to go in for it; but it must not be, now, till there is a right and good reason why, proved and sanctioned. Now, Louis, let's hear a word about it, man; why didn't you take the advice I sent you?"

"Because," said the boy gloomily, "others advised me differently. They told me I ought to go in at William; and they said I should be sure to win."

"They! who do you mean by they?"

"Oh, the fellows of my division. Besides, I thought, the Governor rather liked it too."

Magnus smiled: "Your Governor! it is the first time I have heard of him from you. Poor man! I hardly ever knew him able to get in a word edge-wise. A good deal has been said in his name, I know, by all kinds of people, especially since about 1780; but poor Gallicus has had small chance of speaking freely for himself. I am not without misgiving, Louis, that you have rather sat upon him at times."

"Well, it is very hard to say I was to blame for it all."

"I tell you what, my boy—a wise man would think twice before he pretended to settle *who* was to blame for it all. We should have to go a long

way back. Bygone monitors of your French division have left many old sores : some of these very Rhine parts would have an ugly tale to tell, if they could speak. The quarrel between your division and William's has been brewing up for a long time, I fear."

"Yes," broke in William, "indeed it has. You let him off too easy, sir. What about all the outrageous things that other NAP did before our time? They came to a pass, that all the school cried shame on him. Old Gallicus has never kept his fellows here in order!"

"Don't be too hasty, William," said the Squire, rather offended. "You have not got altogether as clean a book as should be. Few of us have. There are some pages in mine I don't feel comfortable in looking over. You have been a little too free with your fist here and there lately, to my mind; bullying small boys, some people call it. Look at home, and keep a sharp eye upon your friend Mark's advice; it will be worth your while, I promise you. For your part in this present business, my old neighbour Germanicus gives you his sanction, I know; and what he backs you in doing, is no business of mine at present. I shall be glad to hear you are both willing to think better of it."

"He won't, sir—he won't indeed," cried Louis; and many of his boys joined in chorus, throwing their arms about energetically.

"No," said the old Dame, unable to hold her tongue any longer; "I am sure he won't. He will feel too 'thankful for his wonderful successes,' to stop from pushing them as far as he can."

The bitter remark told directly. "To be sure he will," chimed in some boys of cynical look; "he will have one of his favourite hymns sung, and then lay about him faster and fiercer than ever."

Magnus took a long breath in huge disdain. "Upon my word," he said, "this is the worst I have met with yet. I heard of it, but hardly believed it. And is this," turning to Europa, "the sort of tone you encourage in the boys of your school?"

"I do detest profession and cant," protested the Dame, magnificently.

"Not more than I do, madam," thundered Magnus, "when the profession and cant are known and proved. But when people prove nothing of the sort, and just call names, and sneer at what, for all they know, is good and true as gold, I confess I think theirs is the meanest cant of all!"

"But he jumbles up his battles and hymns together," carped out an ill-natured voice.

"And what of that, sir?" said Magnus, rising from his chair, and looking hard at Louis and the rest. "Which of you have not done the same thing when it suited you? Many a day you have gone and joined in a Te Deum, when you were

uppermost, after a successful round in one of your fights. And you would have done it often now, if you had got the occasion. It isn't for you to blame another for what you do yourselves. What difference does it make, I should like to know, whether you had a *Te Deum* on your side, or whether William let his people sing '*Nun danket alle Gott*'?"

This home-thrust seemed rather difficult to parry. So, while there was an awkward silence, and some of the boys, who are always ready to join in what they fancy a telling cry, looked a little confused and ashamed, Magnus went on—for he felt keenly about this, and was not sorry to let Dame Europa have a bit more of his mind about it too.

"Now hark you, boys; weigh an old man's advice, who has often had too good reason to feel what he says. To hound on a cry of any kind is always mischievous enough; but a so-called religious cry—a cry about religion, I mean—is sure to be the worst and most mischievous of all. That pale wily-faced boy PIUS, and his brother monitors before him—I only wish they had always proved as pious in deed as Pius in name—they and their friends, and their bitterest opponents, have often raised that cry before, and almost torn the school to pieces with its work. I was sorry to hear of its being dragged into this unhappy quarrel; and am sorry you should do anything to help it on. And you don't stand alone: you are joined in it gladly

by those you should be ashamed to have any part with—the sworn foes of all good, and all religion together. Let this be the last we hear of it among you. A fellow's religion is what you can seldom really know ; and unless you do know it for certain, don't say a word about it. It never was brought into any quarrel yet without making matters a thousand times worse."

"Well, well," persisted Europa—for the testy old Dame was bitten with this feeling against John and William—"I don't like this sort of boy going about, as they say, with his Testament in his pocket ; it looks very much like wanting to make a show."

"Are you sure he carries it there, ma'am ? Or is it only a boy's phrase of contempt ?"

"I suppose the boys wouldn't say so unless they had seen him bring it out."

"And why shouldn't he, I should be glad to know ? Why shouldn't he at least let them see that he remembers and respects it ? I suppose a fighting fellow need be none the worse for honouring his Testament as well as his soldierly duty ? The noblest fellows that ever fought for me were not ashamed of it—fellows who will never be forgotten while such names as Cawnpore, Lucknow, or Sebastopol are remembered. I should be glad to think there were hundreds like them. No show, no affectation, mind ; but where there is a sound

heartly feeling, why, in the name of common-sense, should it be hidden away?"

"One can't help being afraid of the humbug of it," said the Dame, apologetically. (Hear, hear! from a few of the boys behind.)

"Don't you think," returned Magnus, sharply, "there may be a good many kinds of humbug, madam? Now I think that sneerers, and jeerers, and a whole tribe of small fault-finders, are often the most thorough humbugs in their way. Half of them don't know what they are ridiculing; the other half don't believe in their own ridicule. And if a fellow does that,—if he calls names because others do it—if he joins in a laugh because it is going round—if he throws small chaff at conduct he knows he ought to respect,—to my mind he is the real sneak, and deserves to have "Humbug" chalked upon his back before the whole school. If you don't teach your boys to feel that, Dame, you'll lose your favourite *prestige* as a Mistress, and you'll repent your mistake as long as you live."

The Dame seemed much disconcerted, but did not at the moment reply. So Magnus turned again to the school, and went on: "Don't you make this mistake, my lads. It is a natural one, certainly, and hard to get over. It used to be common in all the schools, I know. It is difficult to stand against. An English boy especially would almost rather be caught out in anything, than be caught

upon his knees, or with a Testament in his hand. The real manly fellow is he that will bear up against it when needs be. And I can tell you that to face it, simply and honestly, requires more real heart-courage than even to have made that dash up the heights of Spicheren ! Face it yourselves, and don't misconstrue others who do. Never fear to show a plain example, or to seem openly what you are."

The Squire now began to think his off-hand sort of inspection had lasted long enough. He had seen and heard a good deal more than he liked, and given his mind pretty freely about it. Whether he had done much good or not he was unable to tell ; that did not trouble his head. He had righted his boy before the school in the matter of Dame Europa's lecture, and that was the main thing that had brought him there. He asked for a half holiday to brush away the cobwebs of the morning's business ; and just kept a parting word for the Dame's private ear, as they walked away through the playing-grounds.

"I trust, madam, you quite understand me about John's part in this vexatious business. I am very sorry to differ from any opinion of yours ; but this touches me closely, and I must rule it my own way. If he had been urged on to do as you said, there is no knowing what would have happened with my other neighbours, and you might have had the whole school in a blaze."

The Dame looked very demure. "I daresay, sir, I may seem very old-fashioned ; but——"

"I cannot listen to any 'but' on the subject. The long and the short of it comes to this ; John must be allowed to carry out my wishes, or else I must take him away, and do what I can to get the Europa School put under different management."

This was a turn of affairs the Dame was not quite prepared for. She looked confused and distressed. But Magnus did not mean to be hard ; he only spoke like a man who was in earnest, and who knew what he was talking about.

At length she mustered up firmness to say, "But this does not rest with you alone, Sir Magnus. What will other heads of families say, whose boys come here ? They must be consulted, I presume ?"

"Of course, madam, of course. I have only been speaking now for my own part, and about the particular point between yourself and John. How the whole matter is to end, it will be hard to say. I could not pretend to settle that. All our heads of houses must confer together, as they have done before now ; and agree how to bring affairs to an issue. And the sooner the better ; though there are troubles in the way. Our old friend, Gallicus, must be got at somehow ; and be ungagged, and free to deliver his mind. Germanicus is ready enough, I believe ; he has been getting into order throughout his household, and perhaps has his

speech ready. Italicus, too, ought to come, as soon as he can settle matters with that troublesome boy Pius, who, puny as he is, has always tried to have a finger in all things. And there is old Austria's shaky household, that gives poor Joseph many an anxious time of it. And, though last not least, we must hear from the ancient Muscoviensis, if he can stir himself up to speak; though he has let Alick do just what he likes so long, that I don't see clearly how he is going to get into motion. But we must hope for the best. I don't despair; do you try and keep the boys to the plain work and duty before them, and the knotty business that puzzles us all now may come to be settled another time, and in another place. That crafty Louis has often said, 'L'empire, c'est la Paix;' I hope a stronger Hand will soon rule,—'L'Europe, c'est la Paix!'"



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